

NEBRASKA SUPREME COURT

Office of Public Information



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 15, 2011

MEDIA OPPORTUNITY

Who: Chief Justice Mike Heavican
The Mediation Center
Lancaster County Judges and Probation

What: Mediation Award and Community Visit

When: August 25, 2011

Where: 10:30 a.m. to Noon – 610 'J' Street, Suite 100; Lincoln, NE (Mediation)
2:00 p.m. Trabert hall, 2202 South 11th St, 4th Floor; Lincoln, NE (Probation)

LINCOLN -- Chief Justice Mike Heavican will visit **The Mediation Center** in Lincoln for an open house and celebration where he will present Executive Director, Casey Karges, with a commemorative plaque from the Supreme Court Office of Dispute Resolution honoring the 20th Anniversary of the Nebraska Dispute Resolution Act.

Following the Mediation Center open house, the Chief Justice will visit Lincoln's award-winning Probation Reporting Center. (Recipient of American Probation and Parole Association's prestigious **2010 PRESIDENT'S AWARD** for development and implementation of Nebraska's unique Specialized Substance Abuse Supervision Program.

<http://www.supremecourt.ne.gov/press/2010-releases/APPA-award.pdf>

The Press is invited to attend both events.

Court dignitaries joining Chief Justice Mike Heavican include:

- Local District and County Court judges
- Gene Cotter, Chief Probation Officer, 3A
- Lori Griggs, Chief Probation Officer, 3J
- Cindy Wohlers-Green, Reporting Center Coordinator
- Debora Brownyard, Director of Office of Dispute Resolution
- Sheryl Connolly, Director of Trial Courts Services
- Steve Rowoldt, Deputy Probation Administrator for Field Services & Operations
- Janet Bancroft, Public Information Officer

This anniversary commemorates the 1991 creation of the Office of Dispute Resolution (ODR) within the judicial system and celebrates the many contributions of mediation and alternative dispute resolution in Nebraska. Centers are located in Fremont, Kearney, Omaha, Lincoln, Beatrice and Scottsbluff.

ABOUT MEDIATION IN NEBRASKA

Nebraska's Mediation Centers strive to help people resolve conflict, achieve and maintain self determination in their lives, preserve relationships between people, and eliminate the strain of avoidable litigation and pressure on the courts.

The six regional ODR-approved non-profit community mediation centers provide "best practice" approaches to mediation, facilitation, and conflict resolution. Mediation is found to be especially effective in resolving disputes such as parenting and custody matters, divorce, landlord/tenant, consumer, workplace, small claims and neighborhood conflicts. Juvenile victim offender dialogue, child welfare mediation, and facilitation of pre-hearing and family group conferences for children and families are particularly well-suited to address the best interests of children and individual accountability. Because of all of this, court referrals to the centers have increased by 134% over the past three years. Since 1992, the centers have handled over 27,915 mediation cases. Of the 1,604 cases mediated in 2010, 85% were resolved successfully.

Mediation is increasingly being viewed as one of several choices that the public, lawyers, and the courts themselves have to resolve problems: a "multi-door courthouse." It is a less expensive, less combative, and less time-consuming alternative to litigation.

<http://www.supremecourt.ne.gov/mediation/index.shtml?sub7>

ABOUT PROBATION IN NEBRASKA

The Legislature created the Office of Probation Administration and outlined administrative functions to provide central management of probation services which, in turn, enhance public protection and offender rehabilitation.

Probation, administered by the judicial branch, refers to a convicted offender serving his or her sentence in a community setting rather than in a correctional institution. Parole, which is administered by the Department of Correctional Services, is where a convicted offender is incarcerated in a correctional institution and is then released for good behavior before he or she has completed the original sentence.

With a probationary sentence, the convicted offender is allowed to live at home, may be required to make restitution, and is required to perform certain activities designed to rehabilitate rather than to punish. This living arrangement allows probationers to financially support themselves without monetary intervention by the State. Also included in the probationary sentence is the requirement of the offender to report regularly to a probation office in the district in which the sentence is being served.

The Nebraska State Probation System is a state-financed system.

<http://www.supremecourt.ne.gov/probation/index.shtml>